



My ZIP Code

www.houstontx.gov > [Administrative Policies and Procedures](#) > 2-12

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES > 2-12

No. 2-12: Employee Suggestion Program (Effective Date 10.01.86)

1. PURPOSE

To encourage and recognize employee suggestions which promote efficiency, economy, quality and safety in city government.

2. OBJECTIVES

- a. To foster a climate in city government which motivates employees to generate and communicate ideas for improvements.
- b. To recognize and reward employees for contributions above and beyond their basic job requirements.
- c. To improve working conditions and productivity in City operations.
- d. To define the steps and responsibilities to establish fair, systematic and timely review and evaluation of employee suggestions.

3. DEFINITIONS

Suggestion: A clear, specific, written proposal by an employee to improve the quality, productivity, efficiency, or safety of a City of Houston task or process.

4. SCOPE

All Departments/Divisions will participate in the Employee Suggestion Program.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. Mayor
 1. Appoints the Employee Suggestion Program (ESP) Committee.
- b. ESP Committee

1. Promotes participation in the ESP and hosts award ceremonies.
2. Determines amount of award for suggestions with non-quantifiable benefits.

c. Mayor's Citizens' Assistance Office/ESP Office

The ESP Office is established in the Mayor 's Citizens' Assistance office with responsibilities as follows:

1. Administers and manages daily ESP operations which include the following:
 - Processing suggestions and evaluations and screening for duplication.
 - Determining eligibility of suggestions for evaluation and award, i.e., do suggestions meet subject matter criteria.
 - Reviewing suggester eligibility for cash award, documentation of benefits and recommendation of monetary award for implemented suggestions.
 - Developing and maintaining record keeping systems.
 - Notifying suggesters on a regular basis about the status of 'their suggestions until final disposition occurs.
 - Preparing letters of recognition for the personnel files of all employees who submit eligible suggestions.
2. Trains, works with and provides assistance to department ESP Coordinators.
3. Coordinates city-wide award ceremonies with the ESP Committee on a regular basis.
4. Develops and implements promotions to foster participation in and support for the ESP among employees and departments.
5. Prepares administrative guidelines for the ESP and guidelines for the evaluation of suggestions, including a rating matrix for suggestions with non-quantifiable benefit.
6. Meets with ESP Committee and assists in coordinating its activities.
7. Prepares periodic reports and evaluations of ESP operations including the following:
 - Reports on disposition of suggestions, departmental participation, speed of suggestion evaluation, outstanding suggestions, adopted improvements
 - Recommendations for program improvements and changes in procedures

- Annual report for the Mayor and the ESP Committee.

d. Department Director

1. Approves adoption or rejection of eligible suggestions.
2. Ensures implementation of adopted suggestions.
3. Determines employee eligibility to receive monetary award.
4. Approves documentation of benefits of implemented suggestions.
5. Determines amount of award for suggestions which generate quantifiable savings or revenues.
6. Recommends amount of award for suggestions with non-quantifiable benefits, based on rating matrix.

e. Department ESP Coordinator

1. Establishes and maintains a record keeping system for suggestions.
2. Identifies and trains departmental evaluators.
3. Obtains fair, thorough and timely evaluation for suggestions.
4. Monitors implementation of adopted suggestions and documents associated benefits.
5. Plans for and coordinates award ceremonies within the department.
6. Promotes employee participation in the ESP within the department.
7. Assists in evaluation of ESP as requested by ESP Office.
8. Serves as liaison between the department and the ESP Office.

f. Department Evaluator

1. Completes suggestion evaluations and computes associated benefits in a timely manner, as requested by Coordinator.

6. POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

a. Suggestion Eligibility

1. Eligible suggestions propose improvements to City operations and will be submitted on the ESP Suggestion Form.
2. All eligible suggestions will be evaluated regardless of employee eligibility for monetary award.
3. Only suggestions that are implemented are eligible for award.
4. An employee, who has presented an idea informally, which has then been implemented, may apply for an award by formally submitting the

suggestion to the ESP Office within 60 days of implementation.

5. The active life of an eligible suggestion is one year from receipt by the ESP Office. To avoid a lapse of eligibility, the suggester must resubmit the original suggestion and request an extension.

6. Suggestions that do as follows are not eligible for award:

- a. Constitute a personal grievance or complaint
- b. Relate to compensation or position classification
- c. Propose changes in City fees or charges
- d. Duplicate previous suggestions or propose applications similar to ones already considered and/or rewarded
- e. Do not include a solution or plan for improvement
- f. Concern matters that management is considering or considered in the past, or implemented more than 60 days before
- g. Result from assigned or contracted audits, studies, review or research
- h. Pertain to matters outside City control
- i. Recommend the use of a specific brand
- j. Relate to new systems, equipment, procedures, or forms that are already being evaluated
- k. Concern problems that can be resolved through routine maintenance, stricter enforcement of existing regulations, or requests for supplies or services through normal channels.

7. Employee suggestions are subject to the following conditions:

- a. In cases of implemented suggestions, employees retain all patent rights to the ideas and the City retains the right to use the ideas at no cost except for any cash award that is granted.
- b. When substantially similar suggestions are submitted, the one received at the earlier date is eligible for award. If similar suggestions are received on the same day, any award will be shared.

8. The City retains the exclusive right to do as follows:

- a. Determine program and award policy and structure and make final decisions relating thereto
- b. Amend the ESP rules and procedures

c. Terminate the ESP without notice at any time.

b. Employee Eligibility

1. All City employees are eligible to submit suggestions.
2. All City employees are eligible to receive certificates of award for suggestions that are implemented.
3. All employees are eligible to receive monetary awards for implemented suggestions with the following exceptions:
 - Department Directors, Deputy Directors and Assistant Directors
 - Elected City officials, appointed advisory board or commission members
 - ESP Office administrative staff or ESP Committee members
 - Employees who might be expected or required to make the suggestion as part of their assigned job responsibilities or research
 - Employees who could without consulting higher authority implement the suggestion.
4. Two or more employees may jointly submit suggestions.
5. Eligible employees who submit suggestions that are implemented will not lose their eligibility for monetary award because of termination from employment or becoming ineligible subsequent to submission of the suggestions, if the suggestions are implemented within one year of submittal.

c. Awards Structure

1. Payments will be given to employees whose suggestions are adopted and implemented by City departments. Award presentations will be made on a regularly scheduled basis. The ESP Office reviews departmental award recommendations. The ESP Committee must approve award payment and amount for suggestions with non-quantifiable benefits.
2. There are three types of award:
 - Monetary Awards
 - Certificates of merit
 - Departmental Commendations

Monetary Awards

Payments will be made to all employees eligible to receive such award, for implemented suggestions of two types:

For suggestions with quantifiable benefits the amount will be 10% of the actual first year net savings or net increase in revenue resulting from implementation. The minimum will be \$50; the maximum will be \$2,500.

For suggestions that bring significant benefit for which monetary value cannot be determined or easily calculated, e.g., improvements in working conditions, procedures, forms, safety, morale, the payment will not exceed \$500.

Award is made after the suggestion is implemented. Full payment may be made at the time of implementation or installation if the full savings are realized, or if the total projected award is \$100 or less. Otherwise partial payment, 25% of projected award, will be made upon implementation and the remainder upon documentation of a year's savings.

In case the estimate of the first year's savings was incorrect and the suggester was overpaid, he will not be required to return any portion of the funds.

Payments awarded are subject to taxes as required by law.

The amount paid for a suggestion submitted by more than one employee will be calculated on the same basis as if the suggestion had been submitted by one person. The amount will be divided evenly among joint suggesters.

Payments for suggestions for which dollar value cannot be calculated will be available from funds budgeted for the ESP. Payments for suggestions with quantifiable benefits will be offset by the net savings or revenue increases in the implementing department.

Certificates of Merit

All employees whose suggestions have been implemented will receive certificates of merit, signed by the Mayor. Certificates will accompany award payments. Certificates will be the sole award for employees ineligible for payment.

Departmental Commendations

Departmental commendations, signed by the Mayor, will be presented to the department with the highest participation rate in the ESP, i.e., the department which submits the greatest number of eligible suggestions per number of employees.

7. PROCEDURE

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION
<i>I. SUGGESTION SUBMISSION AND EVALUATION</i>	
SUGGESTER	A. Complete and submit Employee Suggestion Form to the ESP Office. The suggestion form will include a description of the current situation, the proposed improvement, anticipated benefits and relevant backup material.
CAO / ESP OFFICE	B. Log suggestion
.	C. Determine whether suggestion is eligible for evaluation, i.e., does it meet subject matter criteria.

.	D. Forward eligible suggestion to departmental ESP coordinator.
.	E. Notify suggester of suggestion status, i.e., received and forwarded for evaluation, ineligible and explanation, or more information required. Dept. Coordinator
DEPT. COORDINATOR	F. Log suggestion
.	G. Assign qualified evaluator(s)
DEPT. EVALUATOR (S)	H. Complete Suggestion Evaluation Form within 28 days and return to Coordinator. The evaluation will include a recommendation for or against adoption with an explanation, calculation of projected savings or indication of other benefits, determination of employee award eligibility, type and amount of award, and projected start date of implementation. Notify department coordinator and ESP Office if evaluation cannot be completed within 28 days.
DEPT COORDINATOR	I. Submit evaluation to Director.
DEPT. DIRECTOR	J. Sign evaluation and return to Coordinator.
DEPT COORDINATOR	K. Submit completed evaluation to ESP Office.
CAO	L. Review evaluation for completeness and correctness. Resolve ESP Office any discrepancies with the department. The ESP Office may request clarification or reevaluation from the reviewing department in cases where the basis for rejection seems insufficiently clear or documented. The ESP may obtain additional information from suggester.
.	M. Notify suggester of evaluation results i.e. departmental decision whether or not to implement suggestion.
.	N. Submit a letter of recognition for submitting an eligible suggestion for insertion in the suggester's personnel file.
II. SUGGESTION IMPLEMENTATION AND AWARD	
DEPT. DIRECTOR	A. Implement / install adopted suggestion
DEPT. EVALUATOR	B. Calculate appropriate award (either 1, 2 or 3 below) and submit to Director. 1. In cases where full year's savings are realized, document savings and recommend full award payment (10% of savings). 1a. Recommend full payment of award when total projected award is \$100 or less. OR 2. In cases where full year's savings are

	<p>not realized, estimate savings and award and recommend partial award (25% estimated award).</p> <p>2a. Once full year's savings are realized, document savings and calculate remaining award due.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>3. Score non-quantifiable benefits and recommend award.</p>
DEPT. DIRECTOR	<p>C. Sign documentation of benefits and award recommendation.</p> <p>Return to Coordinator.</p>
DEPT COORDINATOR	<p>D. Submit award recommendation to ESP Office.</p>
CAO / ESP OFFICE	<p>E. Confirm implementation of suggestion.</p> <p>1. Visit sites on a sample basis, to view suggestions in operation.</p>
.	<p>F. Review departmental documentation of benefits and award recommendations. Resolve any discrepancies with department.</p>
.	<p>G. In cases of quantifiable benefit, notify Department Director to initiate budget transfer.</p> <p>OR</p>
.	<p>H. In cases of non-quantifiable benefit, present award recommendation to ESP Committee.</p>
DEPT. DIRECTOR	<p>I. Initiate budget transfer and payment process for suggestions with quantifiable benefits.</p> <p>OR</p>
ESP COMMITTEE	<p>J. Review and approve award for suggestions with non-quantifiable benefit. Initiate payment process.</p>
CAO / ESP OFFICE	<p>K. Receive award checks.</p>
.	<p>L. Notify suggester of award approval and amount. Invite suggester to attend award ceremony to receive the award.</p>
.	<p>M. Prepare award certificates.</p>
ESP COMMITTEE	<p>N. Host award ceremony.</p>
CAO / ESP OFFICE	<p>O. Submit letter of recognition for submitting a suggestion that was ESP Office implemented for insertion in suggester's personnel file.</p>
.	<p>P. Make close-out entries.</p>